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The Hearings on Intelligence

Kenneth Adelman's article of April 8, "Intelligence: The Wrong Debate?" contains serious misrepresentations of the work of the Church Committee and the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. In his article Mr. Adelman asserts:

"During its relentless raking over of the agency, the Church Committee never once touched upon intelligence analyses and estimates. Nor has its successor, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, held a single hearing on the accuracy of intelligence reports during its three years of existence."

As a former staff member of both committees, I can only conclude that Mr. Adelman has not reached the point of reading the products of either committee. Had he done so, he would have been spared the embarrassment of making inaccurate statements.

To illustrate, Book I of the Church Committee report devoted an entire chapter to "CIA Production of Finished Intelligence" and included a second chapter on the role of the Director of Central Intelligence which addressed his responsibilities as the producer of National Intelligence. Book IV of the Church Committee report, the History of the CIA, devotes considerable attention to the problems and shortcomings of intelligence production and analysis from the CIA's inception to the present.

The published work of the Select Committee has included a report entitled "U.S. Intelligence Performance and the Oil Crisis, 1973-74" as well as an evaluation of the A-Team/B-Team effort. Other classified efforts have been underway. Moreover, public hearings on the quality of intelligence

have accompanied hearings on proposed charter legislation, and through the budgetary process the committee has considered and acted on issues related to intelligence analysis.

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[Mr. Adelman replies:

The Church Committee did indeed mention the topic of estimates and analyses, but mostly to urge that it be thoroughly investigated. The committee's Final Report said that CIA analyses and estimates "require the most searching and systematic examination by a future oversight committee." Its own findings in the area, which involved the process of estimates rather than the product (i.e. their accuracy), the committee humbly admitted "can only be regarded as a beginning, only broadly indicative of the problems involved and suggestive of the areas which will require more thorough and comprehensive attention in the future."

Such "comprehensive attention in the future" has not been given. As the article stated, the successor committee never held a hearing to examine specifically flaws in analyses and estimate. Some members of the committee have urged such a hearing, but they have been foiled thus far. The committee has issued reports on oil and the Team B experience. But these are reports, not hearings, written by the staff mostly for the staff (and intelligence community) with little senatorial involvement.]